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ABSTRACT

A pilot study explored what children between the ages of 8 and 11 focus on when they write about writing: how children define writing, what features they believe constitute the act and product of writing, and what kinds of writing children consider important and why. During a half-hour period, 36 students in grades 3 through 5 were asked to write as much as they could about what they thought writing meant, after which the papers were analyzed for informational content. Examination showed that even young writers were able to express opinions about the act and product of writing through the mode that they were explaining. Grade specific differences did appear in children's definitions and explanations of writing. Third graders focused on the material and physical aspects of the act of writing, while fifth graders preferred to write about products of writing and the use of writing to learn. Fourth graders showed variable tendencies, but most often emulated third graders when they defined and explained writing. Length of texts and use of paragraphs increased with grade level, with a substantial increase occurring by the fifth grade. (Data tables are included, along with model writing texts, student writing samples, and a list of 17 references.) (NKA)

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Writing About Writing: Children's Use of Metalanguage in Written Discourse

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Introduction

The ability of language users to reflect upon and evaluate any system of language has been termed 'metalinguistic awareness' (Hakes 1980, 1985). Further, the ability by language users to manipulate this knowledge and communicate about a system of language has been referred to as the use of 'metalanguage' (Tunmer, Pratt, & Herriman 1984, Hakes 1985). One perspective on research in the use of metalanguage has defined metalanguage as the ability to communicate about language as an abstraction involving the use of higher mental functions (Scholl and Ryan 1980, Scinto 1984). Another perspective on metalanguage focuses on studying higher cognitive functions in social and communicative context (Vygotsky 1962) that involve judgments of appropriateness, complexity, and form (Clark 1978:18, Tunmer, Bowey, & Grieve, 1985). We will adopt this latter perspective when investigating how children communicate about one aspect of language: writing. Children's use of metalanguage includes what children define writing to be, in what context, and for what functions.

Research in child language has recently begun to attend to the abilities of children to reflect upon and evaluate their system of language (Cazden 1975, Clark 1978, Levelt et al. 1978, Slobin 1978, Bowey et al. 1985). However, little attention has been paid to children's ability to communicate in writing about their conscious reflection on language modes and language use. Most research in child language has focused on children's use of oral language under the age of five years (Romaine 1985). However, recent concerns of language researchers have increasingly broadened to the age of middle childhood, specifically to the development of literacy skills and the writing mode of language use (Downing 1972, 1974, Olson 1977, Kress 1982, Heath 1983, Romaine 1985).

It is the purpose of this paper to report the results of a pilot study that had as a center of inquiry what children between the ages of eight and eleven (grades three through five) focus on when they write about the written mode of language. In essence, this paper will report on children writing about writing; how writing is defined by children, what features constitute the act and product of writing, and what kinds of writing children consider important and why.

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The Study: Participants, Setting, and Task

This study was conducted at one urban elementary school located in the city of San Francisco, California. The participants in the study were 36 (18 female and 18 male) children in the third through fifth grades, and three teachers (2 female and 1 male). The classes were organized as follows:

Grade	Female	Male	Total	Teacher
3	6	5	11	Female
4	7	8	15	Female
5	5	5	10	Male
Totals:	18	18	36	

All children were monolingual American English speakers. The task took place in a closed classroom setting in each of the three grades, and as part of the daily routine of the students. Each grade did the assignment on the same day during the time that was normally spent on a "Language" lesson. Each teacher was given the same written directions and asked to read these directions to the class (see Appendix VII) during their normally occurring language period. The teachers were asked not to define the word, "writing", to the class nor to allow students to use a dictionary definition. Teachers were also asked not to give overt prompts to the students although the students were free to talk among themselves about the topic. We explained that we were very interested in the children's perceptions and definitions of what writing meant. The teachers were asked to be participant researchers by writing down any questions the students had, and by observing the amount and type of verbal interaction between students about the topic. Examples of student verbal questioning are given in Appendix VIII.

The students were asked to write as much as they could during a half-hour period. Afterwards, the student writing texts were collected and analyzed for informational content. What did third through fifth graders write about when they were asked to write about one mode of language use? We found no gender specific differences. However, some very definite grade-specific patterns emerged in students' varied definitions of writing, in their perceptions of what forms writing takes, what their favorite forms of writing are, and finally, why writing is done at all.

Patterns in Student Texts

Using Hasan's (1985) definition of idea unit as our unit of analysis, we found that the mean length of text among third graders was $\overline{X}$ = 5.72 idea units (basically corresponding to independent clauses). Third graders also used the fewest number of paragraphs in their texts ($\overline{X}$ = 1.2). Fourth graders surprised us by producing fewer idea units per text than third graders ($\overline{X}$ = 4.73) but increased their use of paragraphs per text ($\overline{X}$ = 1.7). Fifth grade children made a substantial leap both in idea units presented ($\overline{X}$ = 10.70) and in paragraphs used ($\overline{X}$ = 3.3). These results are summarized in Table I.

In effect we found that there was a tendency for children to increase the length of text and use of

Table I

Text Features

Means by Grade

Idea Units per Text:		Paragraphs per Text:	
Grade 3:	$\overline{X}$ = 5.72	Grade 3:	$\overline{X}$ = 1.2
Grade 4:	$\overline{X}$ = 4.73	Grade 4:	$\overline{X}$ = 1.7
Grade 5:	$\overline{X}$ = 10.70	Grade 5:	$\overline{X}$ = 3.3

Table II

Children's Use of Noun and Verb Forms of 'Writing'

Percentages and Means by Grade

Percentages:

	NOUN:	VERB:	(N)
Grade 3:	.80	.90	11
Grade 4:	.60	.93	15
Grade 5:	1.00	1.00	10

Means:

	NOUN:	VERB:	(N)
Grade 3:	$\overline{X}$ = 1.3	$\overline{X}$ = 2.2	11
Grade 4:	$\overline{X}$ = 1.5	$\overline{X}$ = 1.8	15
Grade 5:	$\overline{X}$ = 4.0	$\overline{X}$ = 3.0	10

paragraphing with increase in grade level, with a substantial increase occurring by the fifth grade.

Writing as process and product:

First of all, we discovered that children over all three grade levels distinguished between writing as **process** (i.e., the act of writing) and writing as **product** (i.e., the text). This usually occurred through the use of 'writing' as a verb and 'writing' as a noun. The verb 'writing' was used by 90% of the third graders and they used it an average of 2.2 times in each text (see Table II). However, a slightly lower percentage of the third graders were found to refer to 'writing' as product (80%), and they also referred to it less frequently, on an average of 1.3 times per text.

The fourth grade pattern was very similar to that of the third graders. Ninety-three (93%) of the fourth graders used the verb form of 'writing' an average of 1.8 times per text, and only 60% used the noun form of the word with an average of 1.5 times per text. It is striking that fewer fourth graders than third graders referred to writing as product, but those who did referred to it more often than did the third graders.

The fifth grader children exhibited a major jump in the use of writing as product. All of the fifth graders (100%) referred to writing both as process and product. However, they referred to writing as product more often, on an average of 4.0 times per text, than they did to writing as process, which occurred on an average of 3.0 times per text. It is interesting that there appears to be a major increase in reference to each mode of writing and in percentage of use at this grade level. More interestingly, focus on writing as an object noun, a product, a text, appears to have taken a substantial leap among these fifth grade children.

Writing as a physical act:

We coded each text for reference to the physical act of writing. Such reference included mentioning instruments used (e.g., pencil or pen), materials used (e.g., paper), and parts of body used for writing (e.g., hands or fingers). Examples of physical reference are:

Text 3-1: Writing is haveing a pencil and a paper

Text 3-5: I like writing because you get to use your hands.

Text 4-13: It is good for your fingers.

Text 5-3: Writing is when you put something down on a paper with pencil, pen...

(See Appendices 1-3 for further examples.) We found that the students who paid greatest attention to the physical aspects of writing were third graders (82%). Following were fourth graders with 40% attending to writing as a physical act. Only 30% of the fifth graders mentioned the physical features of the act of writing. There appears to be trend toward less attention to the physical act as that act becomes more automatic. Third graders are very cognizant of holding and manipulating a writing instrument, the materials used for writing, and the physical effort involved in writing (e.g., **Text 3-9: 'I**

hate writing because it makes my hand heart.'.)

Functions of writing:

When looking at the reasons students gave for why they wrote, or for the purposes of writing, we discovered that children often referred to the functions of writing in some context, usually that of the classroom. We divided these functional aspects of writing into transactional school functions (e.g., schoolwork, homework), home-based or personal functions (e.g., diary writing, letters to friends) and future economically-oriented functions (e.g., need to learn to write to get a good job). An example of a school-based transactional function is:

Text 5-5: Writing is to help show the teacher what we know.

Personal function:

Text 4-2: People write letters because they half to get in touch.

Economic function:

Text 5-6: ...when we get older...we can get a good job.

Finally we looked at the general communicative function of writing overtly referred to by children. An example of this is:

Text 5-2: Writing is also a way to communacate.

We found that 63% of the third graders mentioned at least one function of writing in their texts. Of this 63%, 45% referred only to the general communicative function of writing, and 18% placed the function of writing in a school-based, home-based, or work-based context. Of the fourth graders, 67% mentioned a function of writing. Of these, 47% referred only to the general communicative function, and 20% mentioned both communicative and context-based function. Of the fifth graders, 90% referred to at least one functional aspect of writing in their texts. Of this 90%, 40% referred only to a context-based function, and 50% referred to **both** communication and context. Therefore, it appears that again, we can observe a tendency toward increase of orientation to both the communicative and school-home-work context based functions of writing with increase in grade level. These data are summarized in Table III.

Individuals associated with writing:

Following directly from the 'where and why' children write was evidence that there are various people ('who') associated with the act of writing. First, and most often, self-reference (i.e., the pronoun 'I') was used. Reference to a hearer (reader) through the use of the second person pronoun ('You') also occurred. The children also referred to teachers, parents, and friends when they explained various functions of writing. Finally, the abstract term 'people' occurred when children generalized about the reasons and functions of writing. Some examples of this reference are:

Text 4-7: Some people like to rite about rock.

Text 4-11: People write because they want to.

Third graders were found to refer to the individuals associated with writing in 81% of their texts. Of that percentage, 90% used personalizing self-reference in the form of the pronoun 'I' an average of 2.1 times per text ($\overline{X}$ = 2.1). They referred to (or directly addressed) a reader in 72% of their texts on an average of 2.5 times per text ($\overline{X}$ = 2.5). Only one student (9%) referred to a teacher, 27% mentioned friends, 27% referred to the general 'people', and none referred to parents. Fourth graders referred to themselves in 100% of the texts on an average of 2.7 times per text ($\overline{X}$ = 2.7). They directly addressed the reader (or hearer) through the use of 'you' in 47% of their texts on an average of 1.7 times per text ($\overline{X}$ = 1.7). None of the fourth graders referred to a teacher, parent, or friend. However, interestingly, 60% mentioned the general noun 'people' as in:

Text 4-5: People like to write cause its good exercise

Text 4-10: People write letters, stories, and books.

Children in the fifth grade referred to themselves in 100% of their texts on an average of 4.6 times per text ($\overline{X}$ = 4.6). They addressed a reader ('you') in 60% of their texts on an average of 1.6 times per text ($\overline{X}$ = 1.6). Only one fifth grade student (10%) mentioned a teacher, one (10%) mentioned a parent, and none mentioned a friend. Finally, only one student (10%) referred to abstract 'people' in text.

In sum, it appears that most students used self-reference when explaining writing. This self-reference was found to increase with grade level among our sample. A slightly lower percentage directly addressed a reader and, most interestingly, those who did were often the youngest students (third graders). This may be supporting evidence for the tendency of young children to carry over oral communication strategies during early experience with writing as a new mode of language use (Kress 1982). This is further strengthened by the trend in our data that the addressing of a reader decreased as grade level increased (see Table IV). It is also interesting that very few children in our sample referred to teachers, parents, or friends. Overwhelmingly, the children focused on themselves when explaining writing process and product. It may be that children in early and middle elementary grades consider any act of writing (transactional or expressive) to be highly personal, and this may be reflected in the very high use of a personal pronoun. As age and grade increase children may be increasingly cognizant of themselves as writers. On the other hand, this result may reflect the characteristics of our small sample. In any event, further work on children's reference to individuals associated with writing should be undertaken.

Descriptors of writing:

Another aspect to the explanation of writing that children mentioned in their texts was assigning

descriptors to the act of writing. By this we mean that children in our sample would comment whether writing was fun, hard, serious, etc. Of the third grade texts, 54% included mention of some descriptor of the process of writing. Of this 54%, over half of the students thought that writing was fun. (We coded actual use of the lexical item, 'fun' or a close synonym.) Only 15% thought that writing was serious (again, coding direct use of the lexical item), 15% thought it was important, and 15% thought writing was painful (coding the lexical item, 'hurt'). Some examples of descriptors are:

Text 3-7: I wite because it's fun.

Text 4-4: Writing is...sometimes sad, and funy

(See Appendices I - III for further examples). Of all the fourth graders, 33% mentioned a descriptor of writing. Of this 33%, all thought writing was fun but 7% thought it was also serious and important. In the fifth grade class, only 30% of the students mentioned a descriptor of writing, and of these all thought that writing was fun. There seems to be a decrease in assigning descriptors to writing with an increase in grade level (54% in 3rd grade to 30% in fifth grade), but whenever a descriptor was assigned, it was usually that the process of writing was fun. Perhaps with increasing grade level, students think less about whether the process of writing is fun, serious, or important because it has become so integral to their academic life. We found (mentioned previously) that students in the fifth grade paid somewhat more attention to writing as product than act, and perhaps less attention to descriptors of the act of writing is one manifestation of the lessening of attention on the act and greater attention to writing as product that appears among our sample of students.

Structural parts of writing:

We found that children from third through fifth grade included some attention to structural aspects of writing as process or product in their definitions of writing (see Table V). Interestingly, the third graders mentioned structural aspects of writing in 64% of their texts but it was almost always the process of constructing those structures. More specifically, third graders often referred to processes such as:

Text 3-1: You haft to us your abc's.

Text 3-2: When you write...you put words on a paper.

Text 3-3: Writing is puting wrods on pappe.

In fact, of the 64% who referred to the structural parts of writing, 29% refer only to the letters of the alphabet, 57% refer only to words, and 14% refer to various structural feature (i.e., alphabet, words, sentences, paragraphs). One student's text (3-6) stands out in its attention to the various aspects of structure. This text has been transcribed in Appendix I (original reproduced in Appendix IV). This student specifically mentions various structural features of text:

Table III

Functions of Writing

Percentages by Grade

	Reference to Function of Writing	General Communication	Context	Both
Grade 3:	.63	.45	.18	---
Grade 4:	.67	.47	---	.20
Grade 5:	.90	---	.40	.50

Table IV

Individuals Associated with Writing

Percentages and Means by Grade

Percentages:

	Overall Reference in Text	Pronoun I	Pronoun You	Teacher	Parent	Friend	'People'
Grade 3:	.81	.90	.72	.09	---	.27	.27
Grade 4:	1.00	1.00	.47	---	---	---	.60
Grade 5:	1.00	1.00	.60	.10	.10	---	.10

Means:

	Pronouns I	Pronouns You	(N)
Grade 3:	$\overline{X}$ = 2.1	$\overline{X}$ = 2.6	11
Grade 4:	$\overline{X}$ = 2.7	$\overline{X}$ = 1.7	15
Grade 5:	$\overline{X}$ = 4.6	$\overline{X}$ = 1.6	10

> Writing is all about writing words and sentences....
> Then when you can write sentences you would be writing
> paragraphs. When you learn to do your alphabets you
> can wirtie poaple's names....

In our data, this student is unique in his ability to focus specifically on such a variety of structural features. This example points to the need for further research to investigate such individual attention to specific structural features of writing among young children.

Turning to the fourth grade sample, we found that only 13% of the texts held reference to any structural features of writing. All of these referred to the construction of sentences, and one child included a reference to 'phonics' but in the sense of a school subject:

> **Text 4-6: 2. letters, storys, sentances,....phonics, math, handwriting**

In the fifth grade, 40% of the texts held a reference to structural aspects of writing as product (i.e., text). Of these, 75% refer to both letters of the alphabet and words, and 25% refer to paragraphs:

> **Text 5-9: There are many kinds of writing such as....poetry, songs, paragraphs...**

With regard to mention of the structural features of writing, we found, in all, that younger students use reference to letters of the alphabet and words as part of their awareness of the process of writing. As with other data, the fourth graders showed a dearth of reference to such features. Fifth graders, on the other hand, referred to structural features as part of text, which seemed to be in keeping with their emphasis on writing as product.

Types of text:

Very interestingly, each grade level referred to different types of text that result from the writing process. In fact, although they referred to text types least frequently, third graders reported a reference to type of texts in 73% in their writing samples. When these text types were mentioned, they were always in conjunction with other types. For example:

> **Text 3-9: You can write letters, stories, poem, and poetry.**
>
> **Text 3-4: I like to write jokes and letters.**

The text types that our sample of third graders mention are:

letters	(71%)	jokes/riddles	(28%)
stories	(57%)	newsreports	(14%)
poetry	(57%)	books	(14%)

Table V

Structural Parts of Writing

Percentages by Grade

	General Reference	Alphabet	Word	Phrase	Sentence	Paragraph
Grade 3:	.64	.29	.57	---	.07	.07
Grade 4:	.13	---	---	---	1.00	---
Grade 5:	.40	.75		---	---	.25

Table VI

Favorite Text Types

Percentages by Grade

	Letters	Stories	Poetry	Riddles	Newsreports	Essays
Grade 3:	.36	.18	---	---	.18	---
Grade 4:	.37	.37	.40	---	---	.12
Grade 5:	.12	.56	.37	.12	.50	.50

songs (35%)

Fourth graders mentioned text types in 100% of the writing samples, also in conjunction with other types. Some examples are:

Text 4-1: People write poems, stories, cards, and letters.

Text 4-2: I like poetry stories and letters.

Text 4-4: well you write newspapers and books.

The types of texts mentioned by fourth graders in our sample were:

stories	(86%)	essays	(7%)
letters	(80%)	riddles/jokes	(7%)
poetry	(53%)	newsreports	(7%)
songs	(51%)	cards	(7%)

Fifth graders referred to text type in 90% of the student writing samples. As with the other two grades, these were in conjunction with other types. Reported were:

letters	(90%)	novel	(30%)
poetry	(70%)	stories	(30%)
newsreports	(40%)	essays	(30%)

In sum, we see that the fourth graders not only mentioned text types more frequently overall, but also mentioned the greatest variety of types. Students over all three grades mentioned letters in a consistently high percenage. However, in fourth grade we see the emergence of essay as a text type with its subsequent rise in frequency of mention in fifth grade. Students in the fifth grade also remarked on a new text type, the novel. Overall, however, we can see a remarkably consistent and high variety of text types occurring at each grade level.

Favorite types of writing:

Students in grades three through five had a tendency to mention favorite types of writing. These by no means were restricted to text type. In fact, of the 40% of fourth graders who mentioned any favorite type of writing, 50% mentioned liking forms such as cursive, handwriting, printing, and 'small writing'. Of the 80% of fifth graders who mentioned having a favorite type of writing, 25% mentioned cursive or printing. Interestingly, 36% of the third graders mentioned having a favorite type of writing and of these 25% mentioned handwriting or printing. Most students, however, listed a variety of text types for favorite type of writing. Again, letters and stories were by far the most frequently mentioned favorites among all three grades (See Table VI), although fifth graders mentioned liking poetry writing (37%) more than letter writing (12%). Students in the fifth grade also mentioned genres of writing

(e.g., comedy, tragedy, mystery) in 90% of their writing samples when they mentioned text types or favorite forms of writing.

Writing related to other modes of language; speaking and reading

We also looked at the student texts for reference to other modes of language use, and especially to see whether students mentioned relations between oral and written forms of language use or relations between writing and reading. We found that in our third grade sample, 27% of the texts held reference to writing and speaking. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the fourth graders referred to the relations and differences between talking and writing. Of the fifth graders, 30% mentioned talking in reference to writing (see Table VII). Some examples are:

Text 4-3: I write because it help us do less talking. and help us communicate to others.

Text 5-9: Writing is very important because it is another form of communicating other than talking.

Text 5-7: Writing means good english and not talking but puting it in words.

No third grade texts (0%) held reference to writing in relation to reading. Of the fourth graders, only 9% referred to writing and reading. However, 30% of the fifth grade texts made the writing/reading relation. An example of awareness of this relation is:

Text 5-10: We right becuase...it helps our skills in phonics, reading...

Although we expected the younger children to show more examples of the writing/speaking relation, we found instead that acknowledgment of this relation tended to increase with grade. Furthermore, there was a distinct increase with grade in awareness of the reading/writing relation. This tends to suggest that children may be expanding their awareness of the interrelation between the modes of language as they mature (Hakes 1980).

Writing as a skill; writing to learn

A last feature that we considered interesting in our writing samples occurred primarily in the fifth grade texts. This was the reference to writing not as a mode of language but as a skill; a means to an end. No third grade student referred to writing as a skill, and only 9% explained that they used writing to learn. A major increase occurred in the fourth grade texts, with 46% of the students referring to writing as a skill and 20% mentioning that they used writing to learn other things. However, again the most dramatic increase was found in our fifth grade student texts. Reference to writing as a skill almost doubled, with 90% of the fifth graders noting that writing was a skill to them, and 80% mentioned that they use writing to learn (see Table VIII). Because of the increase to reference of writing as a skill and means to an end with an increase in grade, we hypothesize that writing is more

Table VII

Relation of Writing to Speaking and Reading

Percentages by Grade

	Writing to Speaking	Writing to Reading
Grade 3:	.27	---
Grade 4:	.33	.09
Grade 5:	.30	.30

Table VIII

Writing as a Skill; Writing to Learn

Percentages by Grade

	Writing as a Skill	Writing to Learn
Grade 3:	---	.09
Grade 4:	.46	.20
Grade 5:	.90	.80

often used across content areas with an increase in grade level among our study participants. Students, therefore, are becoming more cognizant that they are using writing for an increasingly greater number of reasons. Not only do they know that writing is used to communicate but it is also used for a means to an end in various contexts. This is substantiated by student reference to writing context mentioned previously. Some illustrations of student reference to writing as a skill are:

> **Text 5-1: I think we should write because we have not developed all of our skills yet.**
>
> **Text 5-4: Writing is a skill to help you when you want to write an essay...**
>
> **Text 5-5: Writing is to help show the teacher what we know.**

And most interestingly:

> **Text 5-2: We write because it help us to know the language better.**

Conclusion: What writing means to the young writer

In this pilot study we intended to tease out some definitions and perceptions of writing that third through fifth graders share through the mode of writing. In effect, we wanted to know how children will write about writing as a form of language use. We found that young writers are very able to express their opinions about the act and product of writing through the mode that they are explaining. This is one very salient use of metalanguage. Furthermore, the use of metalanguage, we believe, is not limited to analysis and evaluation of language as an abstract system in abstract terms. Instead, the use of metalanguage is an ability to communicate about any mode of language use (oral or written) as a system that is embedded in and integrated with the social and communicative world. The children in our sample showed manifest ability to do so on a variety of levels.

Interestingly, we found grade specific differences in children's definitions and explanations of writing. Third graders focused on the material and physical aspects of the act of writing, while fifth graders preferred to write about products of writing and the use of writing to learn informational content. Fourth graders showed variable tendencies, but most often looked like third graders when they defined and explained writing.

Finally, we would like this study to be a basis for a longer and more extensive investigation of the ways that children communicate about language through various modes. Ideally, looking at a larger and more varied population, we will investigate the ways that students talk about writing compared to the ways they write about writing. Conversely, we will compare the ways children talk about talking with the ways they write about talking. Alternate forms of communication (e.g., drawings about language use or non-verbal gesturing) can add richness to our knowledge of what children know and learn about language as a structural, functional, and communicative system in context.

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Appendix I

What Writing Means

Sample Third Grade Texts

Text 3-1:

Writing is haveing a pencil and a paper.
it is fan.
You haft to us your abc's.
I like to macke newsreport to tell the word the news.

Text 3-4:

writing is when you have a peice of paper and pencel.
you can write a story or you can make riddles with words.
Writing is when you have words and pet them together to make words.
I like to write jokes and letters.
Because you can laugh at some and you can relle Be serious at some:

Text 3-3:

Writing is puting wrods on pappe.
Writing is allso youred for Riddlys portre, books and allsurets
of things.
We cannot get a goof jod if we couldnot write.
If we could not write we could not do our homework.
We allso could not get throw school.

Text 3-6:

Writing is all about writing words and sentences.
You can learn to write words.
Then when you write sentences you would be writing paragraphs.
When you learn to do your alphabets you can writie poaple's names.
I like to write paragrah and sentences.

Text 3-7:

I write because the teacher says It's exercise for my hands
and for my fingers.
People write poems, stories, letters.
I wite because it's fun.

Text 3-9:

I like to write so I can see how my friends are doing.
You can write letters, stories, poem, and poetry.
I hate writing because it makes my hand heart.

Appendix II

What Writing Means

Sample Fourth Grade Texts

Text 4-3:

1. I write because it help us do less talking.
   and help us communicate to others.

2. Some forms of writing is handwriting, letters, stories,
   sentences, songs, and poetry.

3. My favorite form of writing is stories because it's fun
   and easy

Text 4-5:

People like to write cause it is good exercise for your hands.
I like to write poens because I think there are mice.

Text 4-6:

1. So we can get jobs and communicate.

2. letters, storys, sentances, peoms, sa's, language, phonics,
   math, handwriting, questions, spelling, tests, and notes.

3. I don't have a favorit formof writing because I don't like
   writing.

Text 4-12:

1 I write because you could learn to write different languages.

2 people like writing Letters so I could stay in touch with friends

3 my favorite writing is small writing.

Text 4-10:

I write because we have to in school to get as good grade
 in school.
People write letters, stories, and books.
Writing is not My favorite subjects in school.

Text 4-14:

We write to communicate and exerise our hands.
We write letters, stories and lists.
I like to write stories.

Appendix III

What Writing Means

Sample Fifth Grade Texts

Text 5-1:

Why you think we should write

I think we should write because we have not developed all
of our skills yet.
So I think writing will help us develop them more quickly.

Writing is an Important thing to do because if you can not
write then you can't do anything.

I like to write story's because they are fun to write and
they be exciting.

Text 5-2:

Writing is a way to express myself.
Writing is also a way to communacate.

We write because it help us to know the language better.
It help us to write neater and practice to spell the words.
It is one method to write one feeling.

There are many kinds of writing.
There are writings of literature, essays, plays, and poetry.
There are also writings of a book or a novel.
And there is also writings of a diary and letters.

My favorite type of writing is writing letters.
I write letter to help me practice writing.
Writing letters helps me use my imagination.

Text 5-4:

Writing is a skill to help you when you want to write an essay
a story etc.
And will give you practice.

We write because it will help us learn.
If we do not learn how to write it will cause us to have any
writing skills.

There are kinds a writing like stories, essas, poems, plays and
books.

My favorite writing is stories because it is exciting and special.

Text 5-6:

Writing is when you get a pencil or pen and you start to write letters in the alphabet.
We write to develop writing skills.
So when we get older we will know how to write well, and so we can get a good job.
There are many kinds of writing.
I only know of two hand writing and printing.
I like printing the best it is faster to me.
But I can hand write maybe neater.

Text 5-7:

Writing means good english and not talking but puting it in words.
Writing is sometime a poem or letters and other things.
We write to show puncuations.
There are English, Latin, Spanish Chinese, Japanese, etc.
There are storey, peoms and other things.

Text 5-9:

Writing is a way of communicating.
When we communicate we express our thoughts by telling people what we want, and what we want to do.

We write because we have to write at school, and when we have to apply for jobs.
Writing is very important because it is another form of communicating other than talking.

There are many kinds of writing such as letters, poetry, songs, paragraphs, essays, ect.
These types of writing are some people's profession's.
There profession's are very important to many people.

My favorite tpe of writing is story's because you can be creative and you can let your imagination flow.
My favorite types of storys are mystery because it is exciting and it is fun to tryy to figure out the mysterys and another type of books I like are comedys because thier funny and they make me laugh.

Appendix IV

Student Manuscripts: Grade 3

TEXT 3-1

Writing is having a pencil and a paper it is fun. You have to us your abc's.

I like to make newsreport to tell the word the news.

TEXT 3-4

writing is when you have a peice of paper and pencel. you can write a story or you can make riddles. with words. writing is when you have words and pet them together to make words.

I like to write Jokes and letters. Because you can laugh at some and you can relle Be... I Serious at some...

TEXT 3-7

I write because the teacher says that its apriese for my hands and for my fingers.
People write poems, stories, letters).
I write because its fun.

TEXT 3-3

Writing is puting wrods on pappe. Writing is allso yoused for . Riddly portre, books and all sarets of thing We cannot get a good jod if we cauldnot write. If we could not write we could not do our homework . We atlso could not get throw school.

TEXT 3-9

1. I like to write so I can see how my friends are doing.

2. You can write letters, stories, poems, and poetry.

3. I hate writing because it makes my hand heart.

TEXT 3-6

Writing is all about writing words and
sentences. You can learn to write words.
Then when you can write sentences
You would be writing paragraphs. When
you learn to do your alphabets you
write people's name. I like to write
paragraph and sentences

Student Manuscripts: Grade 4

TEXT 4-3

1. I write because it help us do less talking. And help us communicate to others.

2. Some forms of writing is handwriting, letters stories, sentences, songs, and poetry.

3. My favorite form of writing is stories because its fun and easy.

TEXT 4-5

People like to write cause it is ~~good~~ excercise for your hands. letters stories poemes poetrys. I like to write poems because I thunk thinks there are nice.

TEXT 4-6

1. So we can get jobs and communicate

2. letters, storys, sentances, peoms, sa's, language, phonics, math, handwriting, questions, spelling, tests and notes.

3. I don't have a favorit formof writing because, I don't like writing.

TEXT 4-10

I write Because we have to in school to get a good grade in school. People write letters, stories, and books. Writing is not My favorite subjects in school.

TEXT 4-12

1 I write because You could learn to write different languages,

2 People like writing Letters so I could stay in touch with friends.

3 My favurite writing is small writing.

TEXT 4-14

We write to communicate and exercise our hands.

We write letters, stories and lists.

I like to write stories.

Student Manuscripts: Grade 5

TEXT 5-9

Writing is a way of communicating. When we communicate we express our thoughts by telling people what we want, and what we want to do.

We write when we have to write a letter, and when we have to apply for jobs. Writing is very important because it is another form of communication other than talking.

There are many kinds of writing such as letters, poetry, comics, paragraphs, essays, ect. These types of writing are some people's professions. These professions are very important to many people.

My favorite type of writing is stories because you can be creative and you can let your imagination flow. My favorite types of stories are mysteries because it is exciting and it is fun to try to figure out the mystery and another type of story I like are comedys because they're funny and they make me laugh.

TEXT 5-4

Writing is a skill to help you when you want to write an essay a story etc. And will give you practice We write because it will help us learn. If we do not learn how to write it will cause us to have any writing skills.

There are kinds a writings like stories, essas, poems, plays, and books.

My favorite writing is stories because it is exciting and special.

TEXT 5-6

Writing is when you get a pencil or pen and you start to write letters in the alphabet. We write in school writing skills when we get old we will know how to write well and so we can get a good job. There are many kinds of writing I do like to write and writing. I like writing the best it is fastest to me But I can write very greater.

TEXT 5-2

Writing is a way to express myself. Writing is also a way to communacate.

We write because it help us to know the language better. It help us tt write neater and practice to spell the words. It is one method to write one feeling.

There are many kinds of writing. There are writings of literature, essays, plays, and poetry. There are also writings of a book or a novel. And there is also writings of a diary and letters.

My favorite type of writing is writing letters. I write letters to help me practice writing. Writing letters helps me use my imagination.

TEXT 5-7

Writing means good english not talking but puting it in words. Writing is sometime a poem or letters and other things. We write to show puncuations. There are English, Latin, Spanish Chinese, Japanese, etc. There are stores, poems and ther things.

Appendix VII

Written Directions to Teachers

DIRECTIONS: (To be read to students)

I would like each of you to think about the word, "Writing". In your own words, describe what writing means to you. There are many reasons why we write. Think about, and then describe, some reasons why we write. Do you have a favorite kind of writing? If you do, describe your favorite kind of writing.

TO THE TEACHER: PLEASE TRY NOT TO DEFINE THE WORD, "WRITING" TO YOUR STUDENTS NOR HAVE THEM USE A DICTIONARY DEFINITION. WE'RE VERY INTERESTED IN THEIR PERSONAL DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WORD.

Appendix VIII

TEACHER RESPONSES

THIRD GRADE:

Time started: 10:35 a.m.
Time ended: 11:10 a.m.

1. I read the class the directions which were given on the writing task sheet.

2. I spelled several words for some students.

3. I was asked if they were to write about printing or cursive writing. I responded to write about what writing meant to them.

4. In general, they thought writing about writing was difficult.

FOURTH GRADE:

Time started: 10:53 a.m.
Time ended: 11:20 a.m.

1. I read the directions verbatim, listing on the board the major points.

2. Spelling helped.

3. Questions: Do we have to write about a favorite?

FIFTH GRADE:

Time started: 10:35 a.m.
Time ended: 11:00 a.m.

1. I spelled some words to the students.

2. Some seemed confused.

3. I broke the question down for some students.

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